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AUTHOR Stevenson, Christopher L.
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ABSTRACT

This study applies a model of institutional socialization to the institution of college sport. Five variables were generated with reference to college sport as an agent of socialization and to the occupations of medicine, law, and business. The degree to which these five variables exist in the U.S. was investigated by means of a questionnaire survey eliciting the beliefs and perceptions of a sample of university students, an interview series designed to elicit the beliefs and perceptions of significant occupational allocators, and a library research phase generating evidence of cultural beliefs. The evidence gathered indicated that: (a) there is a normative belief in the socialization efficacy of participation in college sport; (b) there is a firmly supported belief in the existence of allocation linkages between college sport and specific occupational roles, but a firmly rejected suggestion of a socialization basis for such allocation linkages; (c) allocation linkages do not exist between college sport and specific occupational roles; (d) posited allocation linkages were overwhelmingly perceived as nonefficacious; and (e) the occupational end of points of posited allocation linkages of college sport are overwhelmingly perceived as nonelite. These results support the conclusion that institutional socialization effects, specific to the professions of medicine, law, and business are theoretically unlikely to occur through participation in college sport in either Great Britain or the U.S. (Author)

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# SOCIALIZATION AND SPORT: A PARADIGM OF INSTITUTIONAL SOCIALIZATION*

Christopher L. Stevenson†
University of New Brunswick, Canada

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INTRODUCTION:

Many social functions have been attributed to sport. There is one particular function, however, upon which sport in educational institutions has philosophically and operationally legitimated its very existence - the socialization function. It is an athletic cannon that sport in educational institutions is an efficacious agent of socialization. The problem is, however, that no matter how factually this cannon is stated it still falls into the domain of "belief", it does not fall into the domain of "fact". Indeed, although there have been many research studies which, wittingly and unwittingly, have attempted to provide evidence for the socialization effects of participation in sport, the balance of the valid evidence has been unable to demonstrate any definite causal effects.

A resolution to this troublesome state of affairs may possibly be found in the theoretical basis of the socialization belief, and that of the research studies which have attempted to verify this belief. The belief and the research studies, the characteristics with which they are concerned and the conclusions to which they are directed, are all based upon the traditional model of socialization - the "family"-type, interaction based model of socialization. This theoretical model locates its socialization effects and effectiveness in interaction processes within the institution; interactions between peers, and interactions between peers and high status role models. This study elected to use an alternative theoretical approach to socialization, an institutional model of socialization. This is an approach that has been developed specifically for institutional analysis. The crucial difference between the traditional model and the institutional model lies in the hypothesised

loci of socialization effects. The traditional model concentrates upon internal interaction processes, while the institutional model posits its locus in the external linkages between the socializing institution and the societal occupational structure.

The power and the effectiveness of such institutional socialization lies in the perceived efficacy of the institution to place its products in occupational roles that have, on the one hand, sufficiently clear social definitions, and which are, on the other hand, sufficiently prestigious or elite. On this basis the institutional model posits mechanisms of both post facto socialization - upon the occupancy of an occupational role - and anticipatory socialization - given the prestige of the occupational roles, the clarity of their social definitions, and the perceived efficacy of the allocation linkage.

Institutional socialization, thus, occurs in the following manner. If there is a belief that a given institutional experience has given socialization effects, then individuals who undergo this experience come to be treated according to the assumption that the socialization effects have occurred. On the basis of this assumption, these individuals come to be allocated to occupational roles that are consonant with the assumed effects. Upon taking on the occupancy of the occupational role, the individual becomes exposed to an extensive set of expectations that are based upon the assumed social socialization effects. It is in response to the pressure of these sets of expectations, the model suggests, that the socialization effects actually occur post facto.

Anticipatory socialization can also occur when the linkage between a socialization institution and specific, elite, clearly defined occupational roles is clearly perceived. In this situa-

tion the occupational role end-point confronts the socializee; thus, the socialization by the role model and its set of expectations can begin to occur prior to the actual formal occupancy of the particular occupational role.

An institutional perspective upon sport as an agent of socialization was developed through the application of this model. The key elements of the applied institutional model were identified, and during the course of this theoretical discussion a number of variables were generated with reference to "college sport" and to three specific elite occupations - medicine, law, business. The variables were, i) a normative belief in the socialization efficacy of participation in college sport, ii) a belief in an allocation process which emanates from college sport, and which is based upon the socialization belief, iii) the actual existence of allocation linkages between college sport and particular occupation roles, iv) the socializees' perceptions of the efficacy of these allocation linkages, v) the socializees' perceptions of the eliteness and the social definition of the occupational roles allocated through participation in college sport. Institutional socialization effects from participation in college sport were posited to be dependent upon a particular interrelationship between these variables. Specifically, socialization effects can theoretically occur (i) if participation in college sport is believed to have beneficial socialization effects, and (ii) if particular occupational positions are generally believed to be allocated on the basis of these presumed effects.

This study was, therefore, descriptive. It investigated the degree to which the five variables existed in the United States. A tripartite design was employed to test the five variables, consisting of a questionnaire survey, an interview series, and an

extensive search of the literature. Because of the diverse nature of the variables, it was necessary to similarly diversify the methodology. The library research phase played both a supportive and a generative role, in that it provided literary evidence to support the findings of the survey and the interviews, and it generated evidence of a type that was not possible for either survey or interview, namely, the existence of cultural beliefs.

The questionnaire survey elicited the opinions and the perceptions of a sample of the university student population in the United States (216). In order to account for possible reference group effects the sample was composed of students from both elite and non-elite universities, Stanford University (112) and San Jose State University (104).

The interview series was designed to elicit the opinions and the perceptions of significant occupational allocators, primarily with regard to the actual existence of allocation linkages between college sport and the professions. The interviews were conducted with Deans of Admission to Professional Schools and with Personnel Officers of Business Corporations.

The evidence gathered indicated that,

i) a normative belief in the socialization efficacy of participation in college sport was strongly supported;

ii) a belief in the existence of allocation linkages between college sport and particular occupational roles was firmly supported by the non-elite sample but not by the elite sample; whereas the socialization basis of such allocation linkages was not supported by either group;

iii) allocation linkages between college sport and particular occupational roles do not exist in the United States;

iv) posited allocation linkages between college sport and the occupational structure were perceived overwhelmingly to be non-efficacious;

v) the occupational end points of the allocation linkages of college sport were overwhelmingly perceived to be "non-elite".

The essential elements of the applied institutional model of socialization, particularly a belief in the socialization basis of allocation, were not supported by the data, with specific reference to the three specific elite occupations of law, medicine and business. These results support the conclusion that institutional socialization effects, specific to these professions, are theoretically unlikely to occur through participation in college sport.